

The President's Daily Brief

29 August 1973

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THE PRESIDENT'S DAILY BRIEF

29 August 1973

PRINCIPAL DEVELOPMENTS

Recent articles in the North Vietnamese Army daily suggest that a debate is going on within the leadership over Hanoi's strategy in the South. (Page 1)

The Indo-Pakistani agreement signed yesterday settles several problems remaining from the 1971 war and should improve the chances for a general normalization of relations in South Asia. (Page 3)

The French reportedly have agreed to sell Saudi Arabia a number of Mirage interceptors, some of which may wind up in Egypt. (Page 4)

On Page 5, we analyze the purposes of Egyptian President Sadat's recent trip to Saudi Arabia, Syria, and Qatar.

Notes on the new Chilean cabinet, an agreement between Iraq and Turkey to build a new oil pipeline, the grain situation in India, and [redacted] French [redacted] appear on page 6.

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NORTH VIETNAM

Recent articles suggest that a debate is going on within the North Vietnamese leadership over North Vietnam's strategy in the South.

On August 18 and 25 the North Vietnamese Army daily published articles by a pseudonymous author who in the past has strongly favored an aggressive military policy in South Vietnam. The author--whose pen name is Chien Thang ("the victor")--was pushing as early as the first part of 1971 for a major offensive, and he published an authoritative exposition of Hanoi's war strategy on the eve of the 1972 offensive. He has not been heard from since last September, just before the Paris talks began to bear fruit.

Chien Thang's two new articles update his past assessments of the military situation. He claims:

- that the US military withdrawal has decisively tilted the military balance in South Vietnam in the Communists' favor;
- that the Communists in the South now have "all the decisive factors to win victory;"
- that North Vietnam has the ability--and by implication the duty--to support the southern struggle as it has in the past;
- that aid from Hanoi's Communist patrons is far less important than the "subjective" assets that the Vietnamese Communists already possess in abundance; and
- that the North's "basic needs" could be taken care of as they were in earlier phases of the war. (He apparently is prepared to acknowledge, however, that the reconstruction effort would suffer if Hanoi stepped up its investment in the southern struggle.)

Some elements of Chien Thang's line do not differ from Hanoi's standard position. The latter, for instance, has always touted the Paris accords as a "victory," particularly because they secured the American military withdrawal. Other North

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Vietnamese commentary, however, has not focused so sharply on the military opportunities that Chien Thang claims to see in the present situation. The standard approach is to stress reconstruction in the North and "maintaining peace" in the South.

Chien Thang is clearly arguing a case for intensified military pressure--a case that probably has greatest currency in parts of the North Vietnamese military and in the apparatus inside South Vietnam. The exact magnitude of the effort he is urging is not clear; he could be advocating a major offensive as he did in 1971, but several references in his article to a "protracted" struggle could indicate that he may prefer a long-term effort at a somewhat lower level.

In any case, the tone of the articles make it clear that Chien Thang and his associates think the question of future strategy is open--or at least more open than at any other time in the last year. It seems likely that the Politburo will meet to discuss the issues he raises when First Secretary Le Duan returns from his extended trip to the Soviet Union. He left Moscow yesterday.

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INDIA-PAKISTAN-BANGLADESH

The Indo-Pakistani agreement signed yesterday in New Delhi has the concurrence of Bangladesh. It should improve the chances for a general normalization of relations in South Asia.

All but 195 of the 90,000 Pakistani prisoners of war held in India since December 1971 will be repatriated. Some 150,000 Bengalees detained in Pakistan, including the 203 Pakistanis accused of treason and espionage, will be exchanged for an as yet unspecified number of Biharis now living in Bangladesh. The 195 Pakistani prisoners that Dacca planned to try for war crimes will remain in India, pending negotiations between Pakistan and Bangladesh.

These prisoners may never face trial in Bangladesh, but their future probably will have to be resolved before Pakistan recognizes Bangladesh. The Pakistanis probably will try to persuade Bangladesh to drop all plans to hold the trials by offering to accept additional Biharis. Once these issues are settled and recognition follows, negotiations on the division of assets and liabilities between Islamabad and Dacca could get under way.

The agreement should also lead to an improvement in Indo-Pakistani relations. Reconciliation on the subcontinent virtually ensures an improvement in relations for India and Bangladesh with China. Chinese officials have expressed Peking's willingness to support UN membership for Bangladesh and to normalize relations with India once the problem of Pakistani war prisoners is resolved.

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SAUDI ARABIA - EGYPT - FRANCE

The US Interests Section in Cairo has received a report from a Western journalist that in mid-July France agreed to sell 38 Mirages to Saudi Arabia. The journalist claimed that the Mirages are for the "exclusive use" of the Egyptians and that Paris knows this. An earlier press report from Paris, quoting French officials, also asserted that the Saudis were about to purchase 38 Mirages. The French reportedly will begin delivery of the aircraft early next year.



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Saudi Arabia does not fall under the French arms embargo against Middle East belligerents, and the French have few worries about any outcry about the transfer of Saudi Mirages to Egypt. Paris doubtless recalls the short-lived and ineffective protests over the transfer of Libyan Mirages to Egypt earlier this year. About 20 Libyan Mirages, some of which are being flown by Egyptians, are still in Egypt.

The Saudis may want to keep some of the Mirages to modernize their own air force.



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EGYPT - ARAB STATES

President Sadat returned Monday from a trip to Saudi Arabia, Syria, and the Persian Gulf state of Qatar, apparently cutting the tour short to meet with Libyan President Qadhafi, who had flown to Cairo during Sadat's absence.

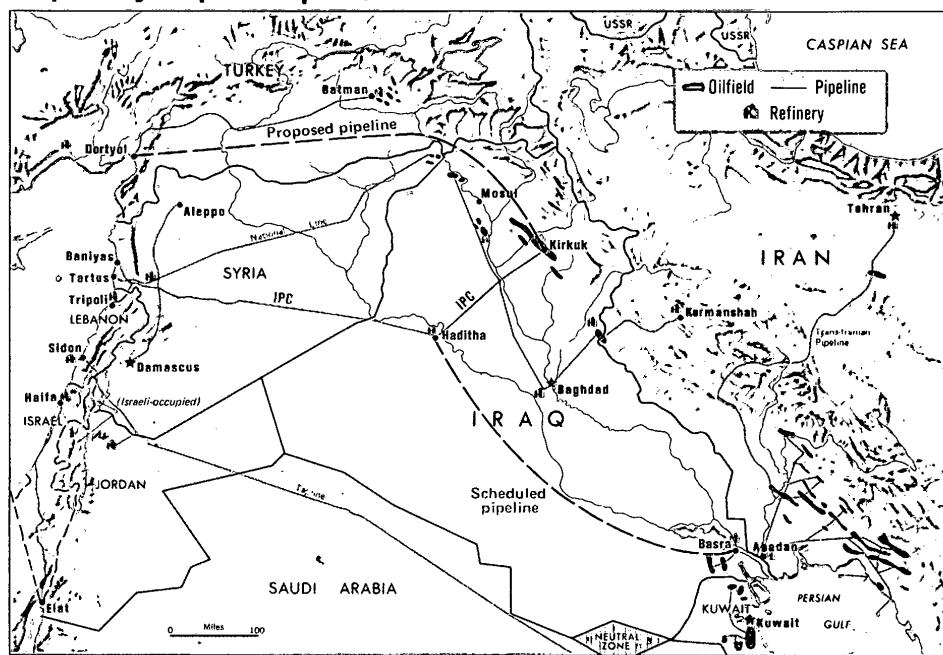
Sadat's primary objective in arranging the trip was presumably to try to coordinate Arab strategy for the coming nonaligned conference, part of his wider goal of forging greater Arab unity in the face of Moscow's interest in detente. The political use of Arab oil and monetary resources is part of Sadat's program for Arab self-reliance and figured in the talks; a Cairo radio commentary on Sadat's stay in Saudi Arabia said that the Arabs should use their resources "to confront the Zionist enemy and his supporters."

The implication that Sadat and Faysal have reached agreement on a plan for the political use of oil is undoubtedly overdrawn. Sadat has more prosaic uses for Saudi money in mind; i.e., more for Egypt itself. Similar assistance from Qatar--also an oil-producer--was probably Sadat's chief topic of discussion there.

In his talks with Syrian President Asad, Sadat probably focused on his attempts to bring Jordan back into the Arab fold, and so reconstitute the "eastern front" against Israel. Asad may have tried to find out about the future of the Confederation of Arab Republics--of which Syria is a member, along with Egypt and Libya--if the other two countries merge.

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Iraq-Turkey Proposed Pipeline



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NOTES

Chile: The three armed services and the police each kept one ministry in yesterday's minor cabinet reshuffle. There is no indication yet that President Allende made concessions to retain this military support. His coalition parties still dominate the cabinet 4 to 1 and control the bureaucracy. Allende's cancellation of further negotiations with striking truckers indicates that he will not ease the hard line against government opponents.

Iraq-Turkey: The two countries have agreed to build a pipeline to carry oil from Iraq's rich Kirkuk fields to Turkey's Mediterranean coast; completion is expected by 1977. The line is being built primarily to facilitate Iraqi exports to free world markets. Financing has not yet been obtained, but a number of Western firms--including seven large US contractors--will be invited to bid on the design and construction. The Iraqis are planning another pipeline that will extend their present lines from Kirkuk south to the Persian Gulf, allowing them to by-pass Syria if that country chooses to block transit, as it has in the past.

India: Although New Delhi stopped buying grain abroad early this month because of high prices, deliveries of grain already purchased will be enough to feed the people until the rice harvest in November. Some belt-tightening will be necessary, however, and this is likely to aggravate labor unrest and result in food demonstrations. The government is trying to stave off trouble by giving priority to urban areas; shortages in the countryside will be offset somewhat because good monsoon rains have increased supplies of fruits and vegetables.

France: [redacted]

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